

**TESTIMONY**  
**LITTLE HOOVER COMMISSION**

- by -

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**AUGUST 24, 2000**

**“YOUTH CRIME AND VIOLENCE PREVENTION”**

Thank you for inviting me to participate in your study of youth crime and violence prevention in California. There has never been a more important or timely subject.

I believe to effectively address this important subject requires a balance between prevention and enforcement. I am absolutely convinced the earlier we identify a child who is exhibiting behavior that would put him/her at risk, the better chance we will have to help and minimize the negative consequence the child will experience as he/she matures.

My concerns are increased because of statistics that state: truancy is the most powerful predictor of juvenile delinquency; murder by 12 to 17-year olds increased 95% between 1980 and 1994; violence is the number one killer of youth in California; 35% of 12-year olds are regularly left by themselves while parents work; juvenile violent crimes triple in the hour after school; 1-in-5 juvenile violent crimes are committed between 2pm and 6pm on school days; 12 to 17-year olds are crime victims five times more than adults over 35 years old. I am also worried because of a report that was recently published by the U.S. Census Bureau that states: "At any given time, one of five children may have a mental health problem involving emotions, socialization and behavior." Research shows that when we intervene early, we can help our children lead a healthy and fulfilling life instead of a life of crime, violence and incarceration.

Today I will highlight parts of the written testimony I feel are most important. First, I would like to talk about the possibility of developing an early intervention program in elementary and kindergarten schools. Then I will highlight some of the programs that are currently in place in Monrovia that have helped our city address youth crime and violence.

**PREVENTION**

We all know that medical paramedics are used to immediately respond to an emergency, stabilize the patient and then find the appropriate medical support to continue treatment. With that thought in mind, I believe we should strongly consider starting a program that would provide all of our schools with an early intervention specialist. For lack of a better title I will call this person a “psychological paramedic” who would be properly trained to identify early

warning signs that would help identify at-risk students with family problems, poor socialization progress and mental health issues.

This “paramedic” would work with children (preferably in our elementary and kindergarten schools) when they are just starting to show at-risk behavior. We have all seen young children who are demonstrating anti-social behavior and we can predict the consequences of inaction.

We know that if a 9-year old child who is acting out does not receive help, by the time he/she is 16 years old he/she will be a real problem. When we observe the early warning signs we need to have a system in place to do something to help instead of waiting for the child to fail.

Currently, most schools do not have a program to coordinate the services that are needed to help address the problem at an early time and provide appropriate followup.

To make this type of support available to our children and their families, California should develop a program that would provide our schools with this “paramedic.” This could be accomplished by designing a special six-month full-time intensified course of study for our universities and, if necessary, subsidize tuition to get the students interested in the training. The initial goal would be to train enough people to start making a difference.

The course work should include - but not be limited to - classroom instruction and hands-on experience in symptom identification, conflict resolution, resource development, coordination and management. The course should instill in the student the ability to be a good listener and friend to the children.

I don't necessarily think the "paramedic" needs to be a police officer or a psychologist. This person needs to have the skills and insight to identify the symptoms of a problem, the ability to bring together professional resources to address the problem and become a good friend and helper to the child and family to get them to attend and complete the treatment successfully.

Monrovia has a similar program called Project C.A.R.Y. (Cooperation for At Risk Youth). This is a team of people who work together to identify, at the earliest possible time, students who are “at risk” of failure because of mental health and socialization problems, behavior problems, drug involvement, gang activity and/or parental neglect. It is a three-member team with a Youth Services Officer (YSO) from the police department, a counselor from Santa Anita Family Services Center and a counselor from the school district. They come together to identify and offer “customized” individual treatment to those young people who are demonstrating at-risk behavior. Referrals to this team are made by teachers, parents and/or police officials.

The following is a brief summary of a number of special programs the City of Monrovia has implemented to address youth crime and violence prevention:

### **Safe City/Safe Campus Task Force**

This program brings together the police, city, school district and community to address the safety of our children when they are going to and from school and while attending school. When asked the question of where our future problems might come from, Monrovia realized many would come from our future adults, the youth of today. Everyone knows the uneducated child of today is the criminal of tomorrow, the welfare recipient of tomorrow, and the adult of

tomorrow who never reaches his/her true potential. Incidents involving the emergence of gang activity and guns on campuses in spring of 1994 caused our community to combine efforts and resources to prevent campus violence and develop programs to better prepare our youth for their future responsibilities and challenges.

We realized that one of the most influential and important experiences for Monrovia's youth is school. However, for students to receive the full benefit of our education system, we must first get them into school and keep them there. We must also make school a pleasant and enjoyable environment that will foster good learning habits. School must be a safe and secure haven, free from outside influence, distractions and dangers. Above all, we must let the youth of our community know and understand that we care about them and their future. This can be accomplished by improving education opportunities already in our educational system. That is why Monrovia developed the Safe City/Safe Campus Task Force as part of our Community Activist Policing Program.

Monrovia has accepted the challenge to use all of its resources to ensure the safety and well being of our children on the streets, in public places, and at our schools. The task force deals with problems that mutually impact law enforcement and the school district. The task force is made up of representatives from all city departments, including police and community services. School district representatives include administrators, principals and teachers. The task force meets bi-monthly and more frequently in subcommittees. At the line level all groups work together on a daily basis. The following are several programs that were implemented because of this partnership:

### **Super Summit II – “A Summit for Student Success”**

On May 25, 2000, Super Summit II was held at Monrovia Canyon Park Conference Center and was sponsored by the City and Monrovia Unified School District. There were 86 participants, of which 20 were students. Participants represented education, government, clergy, law enforcement, students and community groups who shared their views and knowledge on safety issues. They collectively made the following strategic recommendations on programs to improve youth safety (\*for more details see attached copy of the final report):

Recommendation #1	Provide After-School Activities
Recommendation #2	Increase Job Opportunities for Youth
Recommendation #3	Make Information Readily Available on Services and Economic Assistance
Recommendation #4	Expand Mentoring, Counseling and Peer Counseling Programs
Recommendation #5	Provide Transportation to and from School and After-School Activities
Recommendation #6	Improve Communication, Coordination and Partnership Efforts

Our city and school district are currently working on implementing the recommendations.

### **Anti-Truancy/Daytime Curfew Ordinance**

One of the task force's first projects was to prevent student truancy. Together, the task force developed and enacted the nation's first Anti-Truancy/Daytime Curfew Ordinance. This program is a non-criminal pre-delinquent effort to keep students in school and hold them accountable should they choose to be truant.

Experts agree that truancy is habit-forming and contributes to gang involvement, experimentation with drugs, crime, and a high dropout rate. When located, truants are given a non-criminal written citation (like a traffic ticket) to appear in the Traffic Division of Juvenile Court with a parent or legal guardian. If found guilty, they are given the choice of a fine of \$127 or 28 hours of community service. Ninety-nine percent of the students have taken the community work option instead of the fine. In addition to the fine, the court may also suspend or delay the issuance of a driver's license to the minor. The ordinance also applies to students who attend school outside the local school district who are found in the community or on Monrovia school campuses and are truant from their respective schools. When any juvenile fails to appear in traffic court, an arrest warrant can be issued for the minor. No case is heard unless the minor has their parent or legal guardian present. Should the court determine a parent or legal guardian is not exercising proper control and supervision over the minor, the court may require the parent to attend a free parent education program that is sponsored by the police department.

Since its inception in 1994, the program has contributed to a 39% reduction in truancy and a 40% reduction in the crime rate during school hours. Over 900 citations have been issued. This program has been used as a model for similar programs in numerous cities throughout California and across the nation. In 1999, it was awarded the Webber Seavey Award (\*see attached article) and recognized by the International Association of Chiefs of Police as one of the three best community-based programs worldwide (\*see attached Research Notes and Information on Truancy/Student DropOut Rate).

### **School Attendance Review Board (SARB)**

The police department hosts and participates in monthly SARB meetings that are held in the police department's Community Policing room. SARB diverts students with school attendance and/or behavior problems from the juvenile justice system by providing guidance and coordinated community services to meet their special needs. SARB is comprised of school officials, police officers, probation officers, district attorneys, community members and counselors. School officials report a significant improvement in student and parent participation since meetings were changed from school district offices to the police department.

### **D.A.R.E. Parenting Workshop Program/Child Care**

Because we believe parents, guardians and family members are the most important stakeholders when we are talking about the future of our children, the police department

sponsors and coordinates a free D.A.R.E. parenting workshop, with free child care and specialized activities for children while their parents are attending the workshops. It offers new ways for parents to become more effective with their children by providing a 12-hour parenting program that meets once per week for six weeks. A specially trained police officer facilitates the workshop and uses counseling professionals from the community to address such topics as effective communication, discipline, drug abuse identification and prevention, peer pressure, violence prevention, conflict resolution and self-esteem building. I personally talk to parents who have attended the workshops. They are very grateful the police department is willing to sponsor a program that helps them when they see their children failing and getting into trouble and they don't know what to do or where to go for help. They also appreciate the department's efforts to prevent delinquency instead of simply locking their children up when they get into trouble. The workshops are always full. This year the workshops will also be presented in Spanish.

### **"O" Tolerance to Violence on School Campuses**

When a student is involved in any fighting on campus, the student responsible for the fight receives a non-criminal citation to appear in Juvenile Traffic court with a parent or guardian. The citation is separate from any school discipline. Students are reluctant to fight because of the required court appearance with a parent and it provides an excuse not to fight by telling the aggressor "I don't want to get a ticket." School officials report a dramatic reduction in fights on campus since this program began.

### **School Uniform Policy**

The task force also recommended a school uniform policy as another means of maintaining a safe and friendly environment on grammar and middle school campuses. The school district implemented the uniform policy at the start of the 1995 school year. With uniforms, student pride has increased, socio-economic barriers have been reduced and gang attire has been eliminated. The uniforms also assist police, school, and probation officials recognize students who belong to Monrovia schools and those who do not. The parents are supportive of the program as evidenced by an 82% support ratio. Parents realized the uniforms are affordable, stylish, and do not subject their children to mistaken gang violence because of their clothing. Uniforms are provided free to families who cannot afford them.

### **Parents on Campus Program**

This program is made up of parents or guardians who volunteer to participate on school campuses to assist in maintaining order on campus. It provides a positive campus experience by showing students their parents support them and believe their safety and education are important and they are willing to volunteer their time to make school safe and fun. Parents and students achieve a better understanding of each other's needs and responsibilities.

## **Emergency Communication System**

The task force recognized school campuses are vulnerable to outside influence and major events occurring on and off campus. We know that a gang fight in the community on a Saturday night can carry over and become a problem on school campuses the following Monday. For this reason, the Communication System was established. In the event of any violence or gang activity on or off campus that could impact the schools or community, the Police Watch Commander quickly establishes a dialog between the police department and school district to be proactive instead of reactive to potential problems. If the incident occurs on campus, the principal contacts the Watch Commander. They work together when addressing problems to ensure the safety of students and eliminate problems that develop because of late information, misinformation and/or rumor. The school superintendent and the police chief have each other's home telephone numbers and they encourage each other to call any time, day or night on issues of mutual concern. The goal is to give each other and their organizations early warning of incidents that can impact the schools and/or community, and to afford each other time to plan for and prevent an incident from escalating instead of reacting after it occurs.

## **Crisis Response Box**

In June 2000, the Attorney General and State Superintendent of Public Instruction "Safe Schools Task Force" released their final report. One of the recommendations was the development of a Crisis Response Box to provide the police and schools with the most up-to-date lessons learned from recent school crisis in the nation and to assist them in developing crisis response plans as an essential element of the safe schools planning process.

The purpose of the box is to provide the police and school administrators with immediate information necessary to manage a major critical incident.

Attached is a copy of information that should be included in the box. Monrovia has completed approximately 85% of the information required for the box and our Tactical Response Team and patrol officers have conducted three mock drills on school campuses to test and develop information needed for the box.

## **School Security Inspection Program**

Crime prevention is important for safe campuses. To address this void, the police department provides security inspections for all schools. The inspections cover conditions that breed crime such as hidden spots where trouble can occur, poor lighting conditions, providing cell telephone communication and recommending appropriate alarms and other security measures intended to reduce crime.

## **Project Safe Haven**

In 1999, the police department worked with various churches in the community and the superior court to establish a child custody exchange location at the United Methodist Church of Monrovia, instead of the lobby of the police station or on the corner of a city street. The goal

of the program is to reduce conflicts between divorced parents during child custody exchanges. This is accomplished by providing a video-monitored drop-off and pick-up area at the church that is staffed by volunteers. There is no contact between hostile parents during custody exchanges; the drop-off area provides an environment where child custody exchanges can be done safely and comfortably; and it eliminates children's worries and fears during custody exchanges. Currently, there are 16 couples using the service, which is staffed with 39 volunteers.

## **Stop Gun Violence Bounty Program**

In February 1997, Monrovia implemented the "Stop Gun Violence Bounty Program." The program works as follows: Any person who sees a person illegally possessing a gun in a public place or on any school campus is encouraged to immediately report it by calling the Monrovia Police Department any time, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, by dialing 911. It is preferred the caller identify him/herself, however, it is not mandatory. The caller may remain anonymous.

Upon receipt of the information, the police dispatcher issues a confidential identification number to the caller and requests a call back telephone number. If the caller wishes to remain anonymous, he/she will be instructed to call the department in one hour for final disposition using the identification number. The dispatcher then immediately dispatches a police officer to investigate and locate the suspected violator.

If the police officer does locate and arrest the suspect for illegally possessing a gun in a public place, the watch commander makes immediate arrangements for the caller to receive a crisp new \$100 bill. Because city funds cannot be used for this program, donated funds from individuals, businesses and organizations are used to fund the bounties.

Since the program began, the department has paid 13 bounties. Two were paid for guns on school campus and one was paid for a play gun that was being displayed as a real gun on a campus. We know that if one gang member brings a toy gun to campus and displays it as a real gun it may very well result in a rival gang member bringing a real gun to school to protect him/herself. Because of this potential problem, the police department felt it was important to pay a bounty for a real or play gun that is being displayed on campus to emphasize a "0" tolerance.

## **Expanded D.A.R.E. Program**

Drug and violence prevention continues to be an important issue in the minds of our task force. In 1991, the D.A.R.E. program was implemented in all 5<sup>th</sup> grade classes. In 1994, because of the task force, the D.A.R.E. program was expanded to include grades seven and nine as a way of providing remedial and ongoing education in this area. A second D.A.R.E. officer's position was created to work with the additional age groups. As one would guess, this position does not come without significant cost. In the true spirit of cooperation, the city and school district used block grant funds, DUI vehicle impound fees, and a federal crime bill grant to pay for the new position. The grant funds have since ended and now the city and school district share the cost of all D.A.R.E. officers.

## **The Boy's and Girl's Club**

The Boy's and Girl's Club concept has a proven history of success for youth who are looking for something to occupy their time instead of joining gangs. The Monrovia Club is no different. It is partially funded by the city and grants from foundations and individual donations from the community. Each facet of the club is designed to promote good citizenship and sportsmanship. A safe and caring atmosphere nurtures a sense of belonging and teamwork.

Officers routinely drop in at the club to show support, participate in recreation activities and act as role models.

### **Neighborhood Management**

Uniformed patrol officers volunteer to adopt a specific problem in a neighborhood. They work with the citizens to solve problems and develop strategies that will improve the area and eliminate the criminal element. The officer interacts with the residents on a variety of issues and assist in empowering the residents in management of the neighborhood. Their efforts are coordinated by a patrol lieutenant and sergeant who interact with the Community Policing Bureau.

### **Free Gun Safety Locks**

In May 2000, the Monrovia Kiwanis Club teamed up with the Monrovia Police Department to provide to the public free gun safety locks – no questions asked. The Kiwanis Club has agreed to provide free gunlocks for as long as needed. Since the program began, the police department has given away over 2,000 gunlocks to anyone over 18 years of age who comes to the department and asks for them.

## **ENFORCEMENT**

### **Special Enforcement Team (S.E.T.)**

S.E.T. is a specially trained team of three officers and one sergeant who are deployed to control, track and combat gang and drug activity. They are responsible for networking with other local and federal enforcement agencies to promote exchange of intelligence, enforcement support and cross training. They are available for special assignment from the Watch Commander and Community Policing Bureau on reports or pending gang problems, immediate suspect pursuits and apprehension of fleeing criminals inside and outside of the city.

### **Gang Task Force**

In 1998, Monrovia's Special Enforcement Team (S.E.T.) established a partnership with the Los Angeles County Sheriffs Department to prevent gang activity that was escalating in both jurisdictions. A deputy sheriff and Monrovia police officer ride in the same car several times a month to address gang activity taking place in both jurisdictions and to gain information on gang members in each jurisdiction. This effort has proved to be very successful by significantly reducing gang violence in both communities. Since the program began, over 200 arrests have been made of known gang members for various crimes including homicide.

### **High Risk Offender (HRO)**

The HRO works with the Parole and Probation Departments to monitor their charges and when necessary, arrest parolees and probationers who violate the law and/or their conditions of

parole or probation. The officer attends parole hearings with family members or victims to oppose the early release of violent offenders back into the community. The primary focus of the HRO program is to minimize the impact of the 240 parolees living in our community. For those parolees who demonstrate their commitment to a law-abiding lifestyle, the HRO will help them find a job and assist them in making a successful transition back into the community. The HRO coordinates information with patrol officers, detectives and the S.E.T. team to assist in their enforcement efforts.

### **Uniformed Bicycle Patrol**

Currently, the department has ten officers who are trained for this assignment. They are deployed in two-officer teams for greater mobility and stealth qualities for on-view intervention. Bicycle officers are charged with enhancing community support and confidence, while addressing problems associated with drug and alcohol violations, gang-related crimes and other serious crime. Face to face dialogue with residents and business owners in the selected areas ensures a good relationship with community members.

### **Search Warrant Notification**

Letters are delivered to the owner and/or person in control of properties where search warrants for drugs and gang violence have been served. Police officers follow up by contacting landlords and meeting at the property to show them, first hand, what activities have been taking place on their properties. The goal is to let them know they owe more to the community than simply collecting the rent. They need to manage their properties to ensure the safety of their tenants and also the neighborhood.

Free group seminars are held at the police department and one-on-one counseling sessions are given to landlords on property management and tenant selection. They are also advised of the benefits of a strong rental agreement and the need to develop "House Rules." A sample rental agreement that is recommended during the seminars has a clause that prohibits tenants from engaging in any type of drug or gang activity. Tenants agree that any of the following violation of the rules will constitute a non-curable breach of the agreement and will subject the tenant to eviction upon receipt of a three-day Notice To Quit: (1) police search warrant raid upon premises; (2) arrest for the possession/sale/or storage of any narcotic/controlled substance/chemical or illegal contraband upon premises; (3) any gang activity. The agreement also states: Tenants shall not consume alcoholic beverages in or about any common areas or public spaces. We have found that many of the drug offenders and gang members have the habit of drinking in public areas of the property. This clause gives the landlord a legal basis when trying to evict problem tenant(s).

### **Graffiti Removal and Investigation**

The city established a program that provides graffiti removal within 24 hours after the graffiti is reported. All city employees and citizens are encouraged to immediately report any graffiti observed.

During the last two years, the Special Enforcement Team has successfully identified gang members involved in graffiti vandalism cases. A computer database was implemented to assist officers in tracking, identifying and prosecuting gang members involved in this activity and when properly analyzed, the graffiti can give the department an early warning sign about pending gang rivalry and conflict.

In conclusion, thank you for the opportunity to participate in this process. If I can be of any assistance in the future, please contact me at (626) 256-8096.

**Attachments:**

- City of Monrovia – Community Activist Policing Program
- City Council Report re: Super Summit II
- Pasadena Star News article re: President Clinton's visit
- Webber Seavey Award article
- Research Notes on Truancy/Student Drop-Out Rate
- The U.S. Conference of Mayors Report re: Youth Curfews in America's Cities
- School Safety newsletter re: Truancy
- California Schools article re: Truancy
- Monrovia Police Department Crime During School Hours
- Congratulatory letter from Lieutenant Governor Gray Davis re: Truancy Ordinance
- Congratulatory letter from Governor Pete Wilson re: Webber Seavey Award
- Congratulatory letter from Attorney General Daniel Lungren re: Anti-Truancy Daytime Loitering Ordinance
- LA Times article re: School Dropout Rates and Truancy
- NASSP Bulletin article re: Combating Truancy in our Schools – A Community Effort
- Law and Order magazine article re: Keeping Kids in Class
- LAPD Fact Sheet re: Loitering/Truancy Ordinance Evaluation
- Crisis Response Box